

Portia J. Bott
11708 Running Fox Trail
Austin, Texas 78759
512.346.2513

RECEIVED

JUL 12 2004

Office of
Habitat Conservation

July 7, 2004

Mr. Rolland A. Schmitten
Director, Office of Habitat Conservation
NOAA National Marine Fisheries Service
F/HC
1315 East-West Highway
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910

Re: DSC Petition - 69 Fed. Reg. 32991 (June 14, 2004)

Dear Mr. Schmitten:

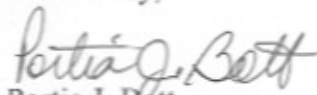
I am writing as a citizen about my concern for our country's deep-sea coral and sponges and the damage being done to them by bottom-trawling fishing vessels. I understand that your agency, NMFS, has jurisdiction over regulating fishing in this country's adjacent oceans.

I also understand that Oceana has filed a Petition for Rulemaking with NMFS which proposes regulations that would identify deep-sea coral and sponge habitat and protect those areas from bottom trawling and increase the penalties for any violations. I believe that we should change our ocean policy to protect and conserve first and exploit only if and to the extent the exploitation does not damage important habitat. To that end, bottom-trawling fishermen should have to justify their destruction of these ancient, fragile, and vital habitats rather than marine habitat having to justify their continued existence. These habitats are valuable for ocean health, as marine habitats themselves for a whole host of marine life, and as a potential source for human pharmaceuticals.

I support Oceana's Petition for Rulemaking and I urge that NMSF adopt Oceana's proposed rule to protect deep-sea corals and sponges as set out in 69 Federal Register 32991 (June 14, 2004).

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours truly,


Portia J. Bott